



KINKAZI, A SACRIFICED VILLAGE:

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF OIL EXPLOITATION IN MUANDA IN THE DRC

Kinkazi, August 2025



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ABOUT THE REPORT

1. CORAP

The Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for the Monitoring Reforms and Public Action (CORAP) is a Congolese platform that brings together 55 NGOs active in various sectors that align with interests of the local communities, including the energy sector. CORAP advocates for the development that truly reflects the aspirations and interests of local communities for sustainable development, an approach that stems from a fundamental question about what development really means for our communities and how it should be addressed. In this context, CORAP positions itself as one of the major actors in the DRC working on the issue of just transition and fighting against the development of false solutions that promote extractivism, including hydrocarbon exploitation, large dams, and others that reinforce environmental destruction and the impoverishment of local communities.

2. CAADD

The Framework for Actors and Actions for Sustainable Development, CAADD in short, is a dynamic group of young environmental activists and human rights defenders. It was established to defend local communities against the social injustices they face in the context of natural resource exploitation, particularly oil. CAADD focuses on issues of natural resource governance, human rights, and climate change.

Beyond the defense of the local communities rights in Muanda who are affected by oil exploitation, CAADD works on the social contributions of oil companies to local development. CAADD is a member of the Notre Terre Sans Pétrole (Our Land Without Oil) coalition but collaborates with several national and international organizations on environmental and oil exploitation issues.

3. IDEL

The Initiative for Local Development, IDEL in short, is a development organization committed to contributing to the emergence of a more just world in harmony with the planet. Its mission is to preserve the marine environment; promote the enjoyment of human rights; promote concerted and responsible management of our cities; and promote a banking system that serves sustainable development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have invested their time, expertise, and commitment in the design, documentation, and completion of this report. This is a collective effort that reflects not only a collaboration effort but also a deep moral responsibility toward the local communities affected by oil exploitation in the Muanda territory, and particularly in Kinkazi.

We warmly express our gratitude to Mr. Emmanuel MUSUYU, the CORAP Executive Secretary, whose strategic vision and rigor guided the overall direction of the report; Mr. Patient MUAMBA, the Ecological Transition Program officer, for his technical coordination and involvement in fieldwork; to Mr. David MUSUNGAYI, Legal Assistant, for his support in analyzing human rights and environmental issues; to Mr. Alphonse KHONDE, Coordinator of CAADD, whose contributions were instrumental in highlighting community realities; as well as to Mr. Apollinaire NSOKA, Coordinator of IDEL, for his active support and deep knowledge of local dynamics.

We also express our gratitude to the communities of KINKAZI for their courage and cooperation in presenting the key events that have marked their daily lives since Perenco Rep has been established in their village.

Finally, we commend the efforts of our facilitators, designers, photographers, and other field collaborators, without whom the voices of the Kinkazi people would not have been so faithfully captured in this document. Through their testimonies, stories of suffering, and resilience, these communities have enriched this report with authentic and true information.



Forum communautaire

“

*“Beto ke zinga na ntoto ya beto,
kansi bafutu ke tila beto pene-pene na
mpasi.”*

*(« We live on our own land, but the
riches it bears leave us in suffering. »)*

”



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary

Oil exploitation in Muanda, in the Kongo Central province in the DRC, illustrates a paradoxical situation where the local population benefit very little from the natural resources extracted. The Kinkazi village, located in Zone A of the Liawenda-Kinkazi concession, is a symbol of the human and environmental consequences of this exploitation. For over three decades, the promises of development and social progress made to the communities have not been fulfilled.

The companies that have succeeded one another, notably Perenco-Rép, have conducted their activities without any real respect for human rights or environmental standards. The population of Kinkazi is now suffering from multiple violations: water and land pollution, biodiversity loss, health hazards, economic marginalization, and militarization of forest lands. Unemployment remains structurally high, [at over 95%](#), despite the local wealth in hydrocarbons.

This situation raises critical questions about the governance of natural resources in the DRC and the role of communities in decisions that affect them. This report, the result of a collaborative fieldwork between CORAP, CAADD, and IDEL, offers a critical analysis of these issues and makes concrete recommendations for fairer exploitation that respects fundamental rights. As part of the investigation in the precarious living conditions of local communities in Kinkazi, an appropriate participatory methodology was implemented to promote exchange between the organizations and the populations concerned. A community forum held on December 7, 2024 served as the main framework for dialogue, supplemented by a structured questionnaire incorporating specific questions on the daily realities of the inhabitants. This approach brought to light concrete concerns and led the communities, with the support of NGOs, to demand more opportunities for dialogue, as well as increased support for the defense of their rights, the protection of the environment, and the promotion of sustainable and inclusive development.



I. INTRODUCTION :

When the development promises clashes with the reality of local populations

The exploitation of natural resources, respect for the rights of local communities and the environment, and development seem to be parallel paths that cannot intersect, and this is now a major issue in African countries.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), development ambitions and wealth creation are increasingly seen as priorities for improving the national economy. This has prompted the Congolese government to launch large-scale natural resource exploitation activities in recent years, without necessarily realizing the associated impacts. The hydrocarbon sector, namely oil and gas exploitation, is also one of the activities through which the Congolese government hopes to create jobs and increase the national GDP. It is in this context that [for tenders](#) for the allocation of hydrocarbon rights for 27 oil blocks and 3 gas blocks were launched in 2022, then canceled in 2024 due to several irregularities, according to a [statement from the Ministry of Hydrocarbons](#).

During the 42nd Cabinet meeting on May 2, 2025, the Minister of Hydrocarbons once again announced the relaunch of the process for awarding exploration rights for [52 oil blocks](#) in the sedimentary basin of the central basin, in addition to three blocks already awarded to the COMICO company, notably in Mbandaka, Lokoro, and Busira.

The government's communication about its ambition to make the DRC a hydrocarbon-producing country through the allocation of several oil and gas blocks has raised concerns among Congolese civil society organizations such as CORAP, which denounced this process in its report entitled "[A dream of development centered on renewable energies in the era of climate change](#)." Paradoxically, the Minister of State for the Environment and Sustainable Development, who is supposed to ensure the protection of ecosystems, has positioned herself as the [ambassador](#) for this controversial project, despite the serious threats it poses to the environment and local communities.

Unfortunately, the Congolese population's hopes for wealth creation through hydrocarbon exploitation ignore the recent experience of oil exploitation in three concessions containing more than 29 villages in the Muanda Territory, located on the west coast in the Kongo Central province, the only place where oil is exploited in the DRC.

II. MUANDA AND OIL : a brief look back at a history of exploitation



Légende

- Zone terrestre protégée
- Zone maritime protégée
- Locaux de Perenco
- Centres de traitement Perenco
- Puits pétroliers offshore
- Champs pétroliers

Oil fields map, taken from the press file for the complaint filed by Friends of the Earth and Sherpa, entitled: Pollution in the DRC: French oil company (Perenco) taken to court.

Since 1969, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has signed several oil exploration and exploitation contracts, mainly in the Moanda territory, in the Kongo Central province. The concerned areas cover a large portion of the DRC's small Atlantic coastline. Thanks to these activities, national production has reached an estimated level of between 15,000 and 25,000 barrels per day over the [last five years](#). However, according to the report "[Active drilling campaign offshore, DRC – Perenco](#)," published by MIOC (a subsidiary of Perenco-Rep) in May 2024, the average number of barrels produced per day was 19,500 in 2024.

We welcome the government's decision to launch an audit, as it is inconsistent to continue to accept the production figures reported by this company without rigorous and independent verification. We hope that the appointed firms, notably Alex Stewart International (ASI) for the technical and operational audit, and ERM for the environmental audit, have the independence and the financial, material, and technical resources necessary to produce a credible, transparent report that truly reflects the reality on the ground.

Despite this economic performance, local populations remain in an alarming state of [precariousness](#). Despite the revenues generated, which are supposed to contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, the concrete benefits for the communities directly affected by the exploitation remain insignificant, if not non-existent. This striking contrast between the extracted wealth and the living conditions on the ground raises concerns about the equitable distribution of oil profits and the governance of the sector as a whole.

Over the decades, several oil companies have operated in the Muanda region, the most recent being Perenco-Rép, a subsidiary of the Franco-British group Perenco, which specializes in hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation. Today, this company is the major player in the onshore oil sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite its monopoly position in oil exploitation in the DRC, it is important to remember that Perenco has not always demonstrated good practices, both in terms of environmental management and the treatment of its workers.

A recent report by the Environmental Investigation Agency US (EIA), entitled “[Death Behind Closed Doors](#),” highlighted serious safety negligence, particularly on the Becuna oil platform off the coast of Gabon, where an explosion claimed the lives of six employees. In addition, Perenco-Rép is the subject of [legal action in France](#), brought in July 2019 by the organizations Sherpa and Friends of the Earth France. This proceeding seeks compensation for ecological damage caused in the DRC; the immediate cessation of pollution (leaks, flaring, discharges); and the implementation of concrete measures to prevent further damage to the environment. This action is based on a series of [scientific studies and reports](#) produced by NGOs and independent experts, documenting the company’s harmful practices: illegal gas flaring, poor maintenance

of infrastructure leading to oil spills into the environment, and unregulated burial of toxic waste. Added to this are serious concerns about transparency, particularly in relation to allegations of corruption and opacity in the management of its operations.

Various companies that have succeeded one another in Muanda include: Zaire Gulf Oil Company (ZGPC) (1969-1986); Chevron-Zaire/ChevronTexaco DRC (1986–2000); Perenco-Rép and Muanda International Oil Company (MIOC) (from 2000 to the present), have obtained vast land concessions, particularly in oil-rich areas, including the Kinkazi village. However, despite their contractual commitments and legal obligations, they have not always complied with the environmental, social, and human rights standards that should govern their activities. These failures have had a direct impact on the living conditions and fundamental rights of local populations.



Several breaches have been revealed, including:

- [Corruption](#) According to a report by the General Inspectorate of Finance (IGF), USD 10 million earmarked for local development was embezzled under amendment no. 9 to the agreement of August 11, 1969, signed with Perenco-Rép in December 2021.
- [Pollution and toxic waste](#): Oil leaks, open-flame gas flaring emitting significant amounts of CO₂ and soot, as well as the inappropriate management of hazardous waste and erosion caused by the burial of pipelines, are regularly observed by local populations.
- [Violations of communities' fundamental rights](#): Perenco Rep in Muanda is responsible for several violations, including violations of the rights to a healthy environment, health, work, and human dignity.
- [Impact on the environment and health](#): The RENAD study, conducted between 2018 and 2022, highlighted the presence of high concentrations of benzene and other pollutants (VOCs, PAHs) in the air and water around Kinkazi.

These findings are at odds with national legal obligations and international best practices, particularly in terms of impact assessment and social responsibility. Significant improvement in governance and regulation in the oil sector is therefore urgently needed. Unfortunately, we note that there are amendments that circumvent the 2015 Hydrocarbons Code.



III. IN MUANDA, OIL ENRICHES A FEW... AND IMPOVERISHES COMMUNITIES.

Oil exploitation in the Muanda Territory, located in the Kongo Central province, had raised high hopes among local populations, who considered it as a real opportunity for social and economic transformation. For the communities in this territory, particularly those in the Kinkazi village, which is one of the villages affected by oil exploitation, the establishment of the oil industry represented an opportunity to improve their living conditions. However, more than 30 years after the establishment of Perenco-Rép, these expectations have turned into widespread disappointment, giving way to deep resentment and a feeling of abandonment.

Located in a historically agricultural area, Perenco-Rép has disrupted the way of life of the inhabitants of Kinkazi, whose livelihoods were mainly based on agriculture, hunting, and livestock farming. Since the company's establishment, its operations have caused major environmental degradation: soil and water pollution, destruction of arable land, scarcity of drinking water, disruption of the ecosystem, and loss of animal biodiversity. Added to this is the socio-economic marginalization of communities, excluded from the benefits derived from the resource exploited in their own territory: the worst kind of capitalism.



Mkomazi village in the coastal basin, Muanda territory

Testimony of a woman from Kinkazi:

“

*I am a woman who makes a living from producing palm wine. Our village was once known as an important center for this activity. But since oil exploration began, everything has changed. Our daily life has become a struggle. Imagine that we have to climb at least 50 palm trees to produce just 5 liters of wine, not to mention the physical risks involved. In addition, the village's only river, which was traditionally used to soak cassava for the production of chikwangue and cassava chips, is now severely polluted and silted up. This degradation is mainly due to the sludge from the yellow soil used by PERENCO to fill its mining roads. As a result, we are no longer able to produce these basic commodities, which were previously an important source of income and survival for our families. Under these conditions, what will happen to us? Agriculture was our only recourse, and today it is seriously threatened.”*gravement menacée.”

She adds what follows :

“

We are extremely disappointed with the employment opportunities at Perenco-Rép. We come from a village of more than 400 inhabitants, but only one person has been recruited by the company. We feel that Perenco-Rép is deliberately excluding us, perhaps because our community is considered too demanding. In this context, what are our chances of survival? Who can we trust to defend our rights ?”

Although oil exploitation is supposed to comply with strict environmental and social standards, the positive benefits for the population are virtually non-existent. The government, which owns the subsoil resources, receives a share of the revenues, but these do not translate into visible investments for the concerned populations.

Testimony from a resident of Kinkazi:

“

We live every day under constant threat. Our fundamental freedoms of protest, association, access to land, drinking water, and even clean air are systematically violated. Even today, we are formally prohibited from accessing our forests. They have been militarized under the pretext that we might vandalize the company's facilities located there. But who really owns this land? Are we still at home in Muanda, or does everything now belong to Perenco-Rép?”

He continues bitterly :

“

Sure, the company provides us with electricity, but is that the only benefit we are entitled to when we live on oil-rich soil? How can we explain that we are surrounded by resources and yet plunged into poverty? This situation is deeply unfair. It must change.”



Perenco installation

In theory, an oil project of such magnitude should generate significant positive benefits to local communities: improved living conditions, job creation, development of quality social infrastructure, and a boost to the local economy. However, in Kinkazi, these promises remain unfulfilled. Although they live in close proximity to the oil facilities, residents continue to face persistent poverty, increased environmental risks, and are largely excluded from the benefits generated by the exploitation of their own land.

IV. VIOLATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN KINKAZI



Horse pump near the village

Despite more than three decades of oil exploitation in the Kinkazi village, promises of development and social progress for local populations remain largely unfulfilled. The establishment of Perenco-Rép's activities in this area has not only failed to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants, but has also led to a series of serious and persistent violations of their fundamental rights.

Testimonies gathered in the field reveal a reality marked by exclusion, pollution, poverty, and marginalization. National and international standards intended to regulate the exploitation of natural resources and protect communities are often ignored or circumvented.

The table below summarizes the main rights violated, the associated obligations, the situation observed in the field, and the concrete consequences for local populations:

Fundamental right	Obligation or expected standard	Situation in Kinkazi	Consequence for the community
Right to work	Prioritization of local labor through the transfer of skills, technology, and innovation to local communities (local content, training, skilled employment).	The employment situation in the Muanda region is very alarming, with over 95% of the population unemployed. This is why Muanda is considered the poorest oil city in the world. It is reported that out of 100% of Perenco employees, only 30% are from Muanda, and less than 1% of young people hold positions of responsibility.	High unemployment, frustration, economic exclusion
Right to health	Prevention of health risks related to farming and access to quality healthcare	Exposure to pollution-related diseases (air, soil, water), including: blindness, respiratory diseases, anemia and fever in children, vomiting blood, swelling and pain in the lower limbs, skin diseases, congenital malformations, weight loss, miscarriages, and cases of cancer, the cause of which is believed to be the company's poor management of environmental waste. In addition, there is a lack of adequate hospitals in the area.	Deterioration of public health, increased health vulnerability
Right to a healthy environment	Compliance with environmental standards, waste management, preservation of ecosystems	Pollution of the air, soil, and rivers; loss of biodiversity. He observes the disappearance of certain species of fruit such as cashew trees and coconut trees.	Food insecurity, loss of access to drinking water, deterioration of agricultural land
Right to land and forests	Recognition of customary rights of use, free access to traditional resources	Ban on access to militarized forests; land grabbing from local communities	The seizure or restriction of access to traditional land and forests leads to a gradual loss of livelihoods (agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering) for local communities, as well as cultural and economic marginalization. Deprived of their ancestral territories, populations see the foundations of their autonomy, their identity and their resilience in the face of economic and environmental shocks disappear.
Right to an adequate standard of living	Company contribution to local development: schools, roads, water, electricity, etc.	Basic infrastructure that is unsustainable and does not meet the real needs of local communities Lack of quality schools that can provide basic education and technical training in the transfer of technical skills to school-age youth, with a view to benefiting from commitments to the company.	Continued precariousness, lack of positive spin-offs despite the exploitation of local wealth

The oil exploitation carried out by Perenco-Rép in the Kinkazi village clearly illustrates the structural imbalances that characterize natural resource governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo. While in principle this activity should generate profits shared between the government, the company, and the host communities, the reality on the ground reveals a profound gap between stated intentions and concrete results.

Documented violations of rights, whether the right to work, health, a healthy environment, drinking water, land, or citizen participation, reflect a lack of effective will to guarantee social and environmental justice in the exploitation areas. Instead of being actors in development, the communities of Kinkazi find themselves dispossessed, marginalized, and forced to survive in a degraded environment with no sustainable prospects.

It is urgent that the Congolese authorities, international partners, and civil society strengthen mechanisms for monitoring, accountability, and community participation in natural resource management. The future of Kinkazi and other villages affected by oil exploitation in Muanda will depend on the collective ability to enforce human rights and put local populations back at the heart of development policies.

Faced with this situation, the demands of local communities are clear: they aspire to live in a healthy environment and regain their autonomy so that they can freely carry out their agricultural activities and other means of subsistence essential to their well-being. They are calling for the restoration of their ecosystem, a necessary condition for the revival of their local economic activities.

Furthermore, the communities express deep frustration with the militarization of the area, which they perceive as a direct violation of their fundamental rights and freedom of movement. They demand, without condition, the immediate withdrawal of this military presence, which they consider incompatible with a climate of trust and respect for human rights.



V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No exploitation of natural resources can be considered useful or legitimate if it does not generate positive impacts for local communities and respect their environment. The development of an extractive project must be based on a balance of interests, where each actor, the government, the company, and the communities fully plays its role in a spirit of shared responsibility.

However, in Kinkazi, local communities live in extreme poverty, in complete contradiction with the Congolese government's ambitions, which plans to expand the oil sector to other regions of the country. The experience of Kinkazi shows, on the contrary, that oil exploitation, as it is currently carried out, mainly benefits a minority of economic and political actors, to the detriment of local populations, who are directly affected.

It is difficult to imagine that after more than three decades of exploitation marked by marginalization, pollution, and dispossession, the public authorities would intend to pursue this course of action. For the inhabitants of Kinkazi, oil exploitation has brought nothing but suffering and disillusionment. The land grabbing by Perenco-Rép, which has become an established fact, is already prompting part of the population to consider a future exodus, as they are unable to continue to coexist with the oil infrastructure and have no real means of reversing the situation.

The military presence in the forest areas, which are now restricted for residents, further exacerbates the distress of the communities. Yet these forests were their main source of livelihood, through hunting, gathering, agriculture, and traditional medicine. This militarization of the territory, justified by security concerns related to the protection of oil installations, contributes to heightened social tensions and could eventually degenerate into open conflict, fueled by hunger, frustration, and loss of dignity.

The negative effects of this exploitation are visible and manifold: water pollution, soil degradation due to crude oil spills, gas flaring leading to the disappearance of pollinating insects, deterioration of air and water quality, loss of biodiversity... all serious consequences that jeopardize the very future of the village and the survival of its inhabitants.

In light of the findings drawn from the experience of the Kinkazi village in dealing with oil exploitation, we make the following recommendations to various actors involved, in order to guarantee respect for human rights, environmental justice, and the equitable development of local communities

That being said, we make the following recommendations:

1. To the Congolese Government

- Cancel all new hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation projects in the DRC in general and in Muanda in particular
- Implement stricter laws on social and environmental responsibility and ensure their effective enforcement, particularly in the hydrocarbon sector
- Establish transparent mechanisms for redistributing resources from ongoing exploitation so that they directly benefit the communities affected by such exploitation.
- Protect the customary rights of local communities to access land, water, and forests, including by prohibiting any unjustified militarization of subsistence areas.
- Hold companies accountable for pollution, corruption, or failure to meet their contractual commitments, and provide reparation mechanisms for the victims.
- Ensure community participation while facilitating access to information on the likely environmental risks of oil exploitation.

2. To Perenco-Rép

- Abandon plans to expand operations: Perenco-Rép's activities have only exacerbated environmental degradation in the Muanda territory and worsened poverty among local communities.
- Respect human rights and the environment: Align their practices with international standards (UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, World Bank standards, etc.).
- Promote local content for ongoing oil exploitation: Recruit, train, and employ young people from local communities in skilled and decent jobs as a priority, then facilitate local investment.
- Invest in basic social infrastructure: Build schools, health centers, drinking water networks, roads, and other sustainable infrastructure in operating areas.
- Ensure transparency and accountability: Publish information on revenues generated, contracts signed, and community projects funded, involving communities in monitoring.
- Fully comply with contractual obligations, particularly with regard to environmental protection, local development commitments, profit sharing, etc.

3. To civil society and community organizations

- Train community members on land, environmental, and economic rights to enable them to better defend themselves and demand redress.
- Continue to collect testimonies and evidence and produce reports to alert national and international public opinion.

4. To international NGOs

- Monitor and put pressure on multinational companies operating in the DRC, including Perenco Rep, to ensure that they comply with international standards on the environment, human rights, etc.
- Make financial support to the Congolese government conditional on concrete reforms in environmental governance, protection of PAPs/LCs(project affected persons/local communities)rights, transparency, etc.
- Support monitoring, documentation, and advocacy by funding civil society organizations and grassroots organizations that document human rights violations, environmental damage, and irregularities related to oil exploitation.



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